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Recreation Commission Minutes 10/12/2010

Park and Recreation Commission

Minutes

Tuesday, October 12, 2010

Approved

The Park and Recreation Commission came to order at 7 PM on the first floor of the Arlington Senior Center on Tuesday, October 12, 2010.

Members in attendance included: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Don Vitters, and Nancy Campbell. Also in attendance was Director of Recreation Joseph Connelly.

Members of the public included: Mustafa Varoglu, Clarissa Rowe, Liane Weber, Matt Pattin, Ellen Torres

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Vitters motioned to table the approval of the minutes of the September 14th and September 27th meetings. Motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg and approved 4-0.

Open Forum – Public Comments

Ms. Rowe reviewed the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Parks proposal to fence off the existing playground. Ms. Rowe stated that she and Mr. Connelly reviewed the necessary fence specifications. Ms. Rowe explained that she will mark the intended fence area for Mr. Connelly and the Commission to review. The Commission discussed the reasoning for the fence. Mr. Connelly explained that it was in the original master plan and Ms. Rowe stated that the issue continually came up during the Green Dog discussions.

Mr. Varoglu asked that safe access to the playground be considered while reviewing the proposed fencing.

Ms. Rothenberg asked Ms. Rowe the anticipated cost. Ms. Rowe estimated the project would cost between \$25,000-\$40,000, which would be paid for by the Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park. Mr. Connelly stated that the Town should consider replacing the picnic tables at the same time.

The Commission discussed formally voting on this proposal at the November meeting.

Ms. Rowe and the Commission discussed the warrant article to transfer land at North Union Street from Park to School. Ms. Rowe discussed the official procedure for disposition of Article 97 protected lands with the Commission. Mr. Connelly stated that the Commission would be having a joint working meeting on Wednesday, October 20th with the Thompson School Bldg Committee.

Friends of Magnolia Park Discussion

Ms. Webber introduced herself, Ms. Torres and Mr. Pattin. Ms. Webber stated their goal was to get involved to improve the

playground and park area. Ms. Webber explained the initial point was to have the playground fenced for safety reasons. Ms. Mayer thanked the group for their efforts and discussed the process. Mr. Connelly stated that he is thrilled to work with the group. Ms. Torres stated that her husband was a landscape architect and that he would be assisting them with some design alternatives. Mr. Pattin stated he was also a landscape architect. Mr. Connelly reviewed the capital process. Ms. Webber stated that their group would also be looking into applying for non-profit 501(c)3 status. Ms. Rowe stated that she could assist them with this.

Spy Pond Project Update

Mr. Connelly updated the Commission on the Spy Pond Stay-Lok material pilot project. Mr. Connelly stated that CRJA did file a notice of intent with the Conservation Commission. The Commission reviewed the paperwork. Mr. Vitters stated that the paperwork included in the NOI did have sufficient information to determine a scope of work. Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve the test installation of the StayLok material as detailed by CRJA contingent upon approval of the Conservation Commission. This was seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 4-0.

Wellington Tennis Court Design Proposal Review

Mr. Connelly reviewed the proposals from Stantec, Leonard Design and Shadley Associates. Mr. Connelly reviewed the submitted cost for each firm. The Commission reviewed the proposals and discussed the positives and differences of each firm. The Commission discussed the use of Leonard Design, which they have worked with in the past, and the benefits of using new designers to give different perspectives. Mr. Connelly stated that he agreed but in this case he felt the Tennis Courts was a very straightforward project. Mr. Vitters motioned to award this project to Leonard Design, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg and approved 4-0. Ms. Rothenberg did ask that we keep the other two design proposals on file for future design work.

Thorndike Fenced OLRA Public Meeting Review

Mr. Connelly reviewed the public meeting with the Commission. The meeting was held with approximately 25 members of the public in attendance. Joe Connelly, Director of Recreation, led the meeting and Commissioners Jen Rothenberg, Nancy Campbell, Don Vitters and Leslie Mayer were in attendance. Also present from Somerville were Alderman Tom Taylor and Michele Biscoe, from the SomDog dog owners group, and Paige Zenbe, a member of the Friend of Ronan Park, from Dorchester.

Ms. Mayer gave a summary of the process leading to the recommendation for the fenced OLRA at Thorndike. This included the formation of the Fenced OLRA Task Force, the completion of a feasibility study by Leonard Design Associates for three potential locations, the recommendation of the task force for the Thorndike B option and the vote of the Park & Recreation Commission to support the recommendation - along with the stipulation that once a fenced OLRA is operational at Thorndike the off-leash hours granted under the 2010 Article 36 by-law amendment would be permanently excluded by the Commission.

Mr. Connelly gave a description of the area at Thorndike that is under consideration for this project. This is at the far end of Thorndike Field, adjacent to the bike path on one side and Route 2 on another. It is where construction trailers and equipment were located when the Rte 2 bridge work was done several years ago and does NOT impinge on the use of the playing fields or any other recreational uses at the site. It is 17,500 sq. ft. of space that would be constructed with the funding assistance of a grant from the Stanton Foundation, capital monies and private fundraising.

Mr. Connelly and Ms. Mayer reviewed the process going forward. Mr. Connelly stated that the next step is acceptance of the Stanton Foundation gift by the Board of Selectmen, followed by selection of a landscape architect for the project, design and public hearings on the design, approval of the town's portion of the funding, and construction.

Article 36 Review and Concerns

Mr. Connelly started by sharing and reviewing the comments received to date regarding the program. Mr. Connelly summarized some of the issues including reports of non-compliance at Robbins Farm. Mr. Vargalu expressed his concern regarding the legal posting procedure and his interpretation of when the Boston Globe advertised the program start date in an article. Ms. Mayer explained that the Boston Globe contacted her to discuss the Thorndike OLRA public meeting and that the conversation was not intended to advertise the start of the off-leash program.

Mr. Vargalu also expressed his opinion that the appropriate groundwork and implementation was not well thought out and done correctly. Mr. Connelly and Ms. Mayer acknowledged that some of the areas of concern could have been improved but attempted to explain to Mr. Vargalu the reasoning behind the way the program was implemented. The Commission spent a great deal of time and effort preparing for the implementation but had to wait for certain time sensitive events, like the Robbins public meeting, the AG's approval and Town Counsel's subsequent approval of materials, to take place before information and signs could be distributed.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that Mr. Vargalu should understand the tremendous amount of groundwork and time both Mr. Connelly and Ms. Mayer have put into this program and to state otherwise is not fair.

Ms. Mayer explained what has been done to date concerning the advertising and education. Mr. Connelly stated that he has met with the Animal Control officer and had reviewed the implementation plan with him. Mr. Connelly stated that he and his staff members are putting up the program signs to ensure that they are properly placed and tracked.

The Commission discussed the implementation plan with Mr. Vargalu and Ms. Rowe. Mr. Vargalu asked if a letter or memo concerning the plan could be given to the Brackett School parents. Mr. Connelly stated that he would work with Ms. Rothenberg to get this notice out.

Mr. Vargalu and the Commission discussed why the program did not request funding assistance within the budget process. This was a by-law amendment that was submitted by a 10 registered voter warrant article – not by the Commission. The Commission stated that it was working to make sure that this program was revenue neutral. Ms. Rowe suggested that if additional resources are necessary for the success of the program then they should be requested in the budget, and also requested that the Commission submit a report on the off-leash program to the BoS in December, which the Commission agreed was a good idea.

Mr. Connelly stated that there were no official park liaisons designated by the Commission or the Recreation Department. Mr. Connelly explained that the A-DOG organization was working to assign specific individuals to assist with getting the word out at certain parks but there was no official designee from the Town. Ms. Mayer explained that this might be something that the Town looks into in the future (it was recently discussed in the context of the Thorndike OLRA) but not at this time. Ms. Mayer and Ms. Rowe discussed the liaison process. Mr. Connelly stated that he would reach out to the A-DOG recommended liaisons and clarify their role.

Ms. Mayer stated that the Recreation Department would be offering free workshops run by Arlington dog trainer, Bette Yip, at Robbins Farm on October 23rd. Mr. Connelly reviewed the clinics. The Commission discussed the positive nature of the clinics.

Rink and Recreation Update

Mr. Connelly briefly reviewed the recreation program numbers and the success of the first session of the Bay State Skating program.

Special Requests

Dave Leone – Spooky Walk – Menotomy Rocks Park – Saturday, October 23rd – 5 – dusk

The Commission discussed this annual request. Ms. Campbell motioned to approve with the condition that vehicles do not drive in the park, seconded by Ms. Rothenberg and approved 4-0.

Arlington Recreation Bette Yip Dog Classes – Robbins Farm – October 23rd – 8:30-9:00 am. Request to extend off leash hours at Robbins by 30 minutes for that day only. Motion to approve by Ms. Rothenberg, seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 4-0.

Capital Improvement Project Update

Thorndike Parking - Mr. Connelly stated that the project was 99% complete with the speed bump yet to be installed. Mr. Connelly has received positive feedback about the changes from users of the field.

Summer Street Playground – Mr. Connelly stated that the playground was 95% complete. Mr. Connelly explained that the Town did hire a CPSI (certified playground safety inspector) to complete a report prior to opening. Mr. Connelly stated that the playground manufacturer and installer still needed to supply the Town equipment specification sheets and study information that was necessary for the CPSI to complete their report.

Gibbs Gymnasium – Mr. Connelly reported that the Gibbs Gymnasium floor was complete and looked fantastic. Mr. Connelly stated that the Recreation Dept did lose use of the gym in the months of August and September but the gym opened on October 6th.

Other Business

Hills Hill

Mr. Connelly and Ms. Mayer stated that there was a question regarding a new housing development's removal of some trees near Park Commission property. Mr. Connelly stated he would talk to the building inspector concerning the issue.

Robbins Farm Slide

Mr. Connelly stated that one of the large slides at Robbins Farm had a severe crack/hole in the bottom and would need to be closed until a replacement option was decided on. Funding for the Robbins Farm slide is in this year's capital request from the Commission.

Robbins Farm Community Garden

Mr. Connelly stated that the Robbins Farm garden group would be in front of the Commission in November for the initial yearly review of the pilot season.

Lighted Field Report

Ms. Mayer asked Mr. Connelly to try to have this report ready by the next meeting for review, so that a report to the manager and BoS could be prepared.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 4-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Joseph Connelly, Director of Recreation